

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) was prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15132) and the Placer County Environmental Review Ordinance. Placer County is the lead agency for the environmental review of the Martis Valley Community Plan Update (project) and has the principal responsibility for approving the project. This FEIR assesses the expected environmental impacts resulting from approval of Martis Valley Community Plan and associated impacts from subsequent development, as well as responds to comments received on the Draft EIR and the Revised Draft EIR.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE EIR

OVERVIEW OF CEQA REQUIREMENTS FOR PREPARATION OF AN EIR

Placer County (County), serving as the Lead Agency, has prepared this EIR to provide the public and responsible and trustee agencies with information about the potential environmental effects of the proposed project. As set forth in the provisions of CEQA and implementing regulations, public agencies are charged with the duty to consider the environmental impacts of proposed development and to minimize these impacts where feasible while carrying out an obligation to balance a variety of public objectives, including economic, environmental, and social factors.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15121(a) states that an EIR is an informational document for decision-makers and the general public that analyzes the significant environmental effects of a project, identifies possible ways to minimize significant effects, and describes reasonable alternatives to the project that could reduce or avoid its adverse environmental impacts. Public agencies with discretionary authority are required to consider the information in the EIR, along with any other relevant information, in making decisions on the project.

CEQA requires the preparation of an environmental impact report prior to approving any project, which may have a significant effect on the environment. For the purposes of CEQA, the term "project" refers to the whole of an action, which has the potential for resulting in a direct physical change or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378[a]). With respect to the Martis Valley Community Plan Update, the County has determined that the proposed development is a "project" within the definition of CEQA.

BACKGROUND OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS OF THE PROJECT

The following is an overview of the environmental review process for the Martis Valley Community Plan Update that have led to the preparation of this FEIR:

Notice of Preparation and Initial Study

In accordance with Section 15082 of the CEQA Guidelines, Placer County prepared a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an EIR in January 2001. Placer County was identified as the lead agency for the proposed project. This notice was circulated to the public, local, state, and federal agencies, and other interested parties to solicit comments on the proposed project. The January 2001 NOP is presented in Appendix 1.0 of the Draft EIR. Concerns raised in response to the NOP were considered during preparation of the Draft EIR and are also presented in Appendix 1.0 of the Draft EIR.

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Draft EIR

The Draft EIR (DEIR), which consisted of three volumes, was released for public and agency review on June 20, 2002 and ended on August 19, 2002. The DEIR contains a description of the project, description of the environmental setting, identification of project impacts, and mitigation measures for impacts found to be significant, as well as an analysis of project alternatives.

Revised Draft EIR

Several written comments were received on the Draft EIR that expressed the desire for further reduced development alternatives to be considered as part of the environmental review process. As a result of these comments, Placer County prepared and released a Revised Draft EIR that consisted of an expanded analysis of the alternatives to the proposed Martis Valley Community Plan Update as well as the consideration of a new lowest intensity alternative. The Revised Draft EIR was released for public and agency review on March 17, 2003 and ended on April 30, 2003.

Final EIR

Following the close of the public review period, the County received several individual comment letters from agencies, interest groups and the public regarding the Draft EIR and the Revised Draft EIR. This document responds to all the written comments received as required by CEQA and the Placer County Environmental Review Ordinance and late comments received through May 5, 2003. This document also contains minor edits to the Draft EIR as a result of comments on the Draft EIR and the Revised Draft EIR. In addition, the County has revised the Draft EIR based on the minor edits as a result of comments as well as minor staff-initiated changes. This document, the Draft EIR and the Revised Draft EIR constitutes the FEIR.

Certification of the Final EIR/Project Consideration

Placer County will review and consider the FEIR. If the County finds that the FEIR is "adequate and complete", the County may certify the FEIR, at a public hearing. The rule of adequacy generally holds that the EIR can be certified if: 1) it shows a good faith effort at full disclosure of environmental information; and 2) provides sufficient analysis to allow decisions to be made regarding the project in contemplation of its environmental consequences.

Upon review and consideration of the Final EIR, the County may take action to approve, revise, or reject the project. A decision to approve the project would be accompanied by written findings in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15091 and Section 15093. Public Resources Code Section 21081.6 also requires lead agencies to adopt a reporting and mitigation monitoring and reporting program to describe measures that have been adopted or made a condition of project approval in order to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The final mitigation monitoring and reporting program for the project is provided in this document.

1.2 TYPE OF DOCUMENT

The CEQA Guidelines identify several types of EIRs, each applicable to different project circumstances. This EIR has been prepared as a Program EIR pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. Program EIRs are defined by the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15168) as:

A program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:

- (1) Geographically,*
- (2) A logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions,*
- (3) In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans or other general criteria to govern the conduct of a continuing program, or*
- (4) As individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.*

This EIR will be used to evaluate subsequent projects under the Martis Valley Community Plan. Additional environmental review under CEQA may be required and would be generally based on the subsequent project's consistency with the Community Plan and the analysis in this EIR, as required under CEQA and the Placer County Environmental Review Ordinance.

1.3 INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

This EIR has been prepared in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR is intended to evaluate the environmental impacts of the project to the greatest extent possible and to be used to modify, approve, or deny approval of the proposed project based on the analysis in the EIR. In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126, this EIR should be used as the primary environmental document to evaluate all subsequent planning and permitting actions associated with the project. Subsequent actions that may be associated with the project are identified in Section 3.0 (Project Description) of the Draft EIR.

1.4 ORGANIZATION AND SCOPE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document is organized in the following manner:

SECTION 1.0 - INTRODUCTION

Section 1.0 provides an overview of the EIR process to date and what the FEIR is required to contain.

SECTION 2.0 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section provides a brief project description and presents a summary table of probable environmental effects edited as a result of comments received on the Draft EIR and Revised Draft EIR and minor staff edits.

SECTION 3.0 - COMMENTS AND RESPONSES TO COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIR

Section 3.0 provides a list of commentors, copies of written comments (coded for reference) and the responses to those written comments as well as master responses to common comments made on the Draft EIR and the Revised Draft EIR.

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SECTION 4.0 – FINAL MITIGATION MONITORING AND REPORTING PROGRAM

Section 4.0 consists of the Final Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the project.

SECTION 5.0 – REFERENCES

Section 5.0 provides a list of reference materials used in the preparation of the Final EIR.